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Edward the Confessor

OR

Sceptre and Sword

DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

Adapted from the French by
BENNETT D. CHARRON, A. M.



JOSEPH F. WAGNER, NEW YORK

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JOSEPH F. WAGNER, 9 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

OR

SCEPTRE AND SWORD

DRAMA

IN FIVE ACTS

Adapted from the French

BY

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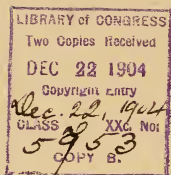


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NEW YORK

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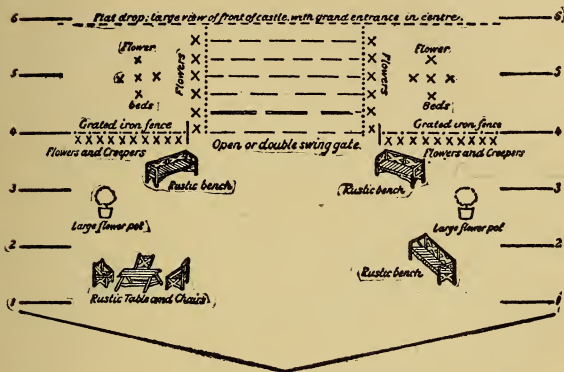


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SCENERY, ACT I.

Castle grounds with castle visible in rear



On flat. 6th groove, view of castle front, with stately entrance in center—and steps leading to entrance—carpet down for ground and walk, front of entrance and leading to gate, 4th groove;—beds of flowers on either side of walk.

Fourth groove, wall or iron fence extending from R. and from L. toward center, leaving entrance same width as the walk;—walls or fence covered with creepers and flowers;—at base of wall or fence, beds of flowers.

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th groove wings both R. and L., tree borders—same grooves, foliage drops;—and sky drop for 6th groove—Moonlight effect.

NOTE:—The above scenery may be simplified; any garden scene will answer the purpose. If castle drop be missing, one representing a park, or garden will do. The style of architecture should be that of the old English fashion, throughout.

PERSONAGES.

EDWARD, King of England.

ALFRED, Edward's younger brother.

GODWIN, Count of Kent.

LEOFRIC, Count of Leicester.

SEWARD, Count of Northumberland.

HAROLD,

WILLIAM, } Lords, friends of Edward.

OSWALDUS, }

OSWIN, Son of Seward.

SWEYN, Confidant of Godwin.

REDWALD, Servant of Godwin.

SYNEWULF, } Assassins.

CEOWULF, }

LORDS, SOLDIERS, SERVANTS, ETC., ETC.

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR; OR, SCEPTRE AND SWORD.

ACT I.

SCENE—*Castle grounds—Castle visible; benches—rustic seats, etc.*
Enter Godwin—Sweyn.

GODWIN. (*looks about cautiously*) They must die, Sweyn; they must die!

SWEYN. But my lord, what evil have they done?

GODWIN. None; both are as innocent as doves; still they must die.

SWEYN. Since both are innocent, why, may I ask, noble Count of Kent, why stain our hands in innocent blood?

GODWIN. Because the interests of the kingdom require it; that of the royal family, my interests and thine, Sweyn. What more dost thou wish? They must die, dost thou hear? They must die.

SWEYN. I see no reason why thou shouldst fear these in-offensive children. They are still in the flower of their age. Besides, are they not entire strangers to the country?

GODWIN. Is it possible, Sweyn, that thou dost not foresee that some reverse of fortune may occur. The King Hardicanute is dying, and to-morrow we may mourn over his ashes. The only heir to the throne is a child of eight years, the young Suenon; and he like the reigning king is of Danish blood. Dost thou ignore that the Bretons, the Angles, and the Saxons, in a word, nine-tenths of the entire population of England have always borne the Danish yoke with displeasure? The grandeur and power of the reign of Canute the Great, succeeded for a time to subdue their discontent, but since the succession of Harold and Hardicanute to the throne, the people seem to harbor in their hearts hopes which are dangerous to the Danish dynasty, and which they dare not openly avow—Dost thou understand my thoughts?

SWEYN. No my lord—I understand them not.

GODWIN. Can it be that thou art so shortsighted in this affair? Edward and Alfred who are expected to-day are the sons of Ethelred, who, you know, was the well beloved ruler of the ancients. Edward is the natural heir to the crown of England, and the chief of the national dynasty so dear to the heart of every true Saxon; and but for the Danish conquest he would, to-day, reign over Breton. The people know this; the whole population say this, and England weeps over her loss—Dost thou understand me now?

SWEYN. This I understand my lord; thou fearest lest, before the death of Hardicanute, the nation, by a natural rebellion, overlook young Suenon, and place the crown on the head of Edward.

GODWIN. Yes, Sweyn, thou hast said it; I fear the people, I fear the great land; but above all, I fear the counts of Leicester and Northumberland, Leofric and Seward.

SWEYN. But my lord thou surprisest me; thou art of Saxon blood, and I could never believe that thou wouldst never desire the re-establishment of the ancient dynasty. Would it not be an honor for our race, and a glory for our country?

GODWIN. Oh, these are ideas such as poets and dreamers foster! The practical man knows no other motive in his actions, than personal interests. It is my interest that Danish blood continue to reign in England. When Canute the Great died, his confidence in me procured my nomination as tutor of young Harold. Two years later I became by the death of Harold the tutor of Hardicanute; and soon I hope to be tutor of Suenon. Thus my power in England continues. In the name of these emblems of Kings 'tis Godwin who governs. 'Tis Godwin that reigns. Thinkest thou that I am ready to forego all these advantages? If Edward ascend the throne, my precedence at the Danish courts will immediately cause them to suspect me, and who can tell what might follow. No, Sweyn, we must know how to prevent the danger. They must die.

SWEYN. But, my lord, could'st thou not insure thy safety without having recourse to such cruel extremities. Does not the Queen Emma favor her beloved son, Prince Suenon, with all her power? The Queen is in your favor.

GODWIN. I do not trust the Queen. Emma is weak, vain and inconstant, No, No, Sweyn, she is not to be relied upon.

There is but one means, they must die. This is my only means of security. Think of it, Sweyn, it is also to thine interest that they die, and die to-night, they must.

SWEYN. And the odiousness of such crime will fall upon thy head and mine.

GODWIN. Who shall know it? Will the darkness of night reveal that which has been enshrouded in its somber security? Will the stony walls of this castle be gifted with a tongue to relate that which has been accomplished in silence and in secret? Thou hast nothing to fear, my dear Sweyn. I have thought over this affair quite seriously. I have left nothing to the incertitudes of hazard. Redwald, our faithful Redwald, has received orders to escort Edward and Alfred to this place. To-night when the shades of darkness shall have enveloped the city, he will introduce them secretly into the castle, and deliver them into thy hands, and then, when all will be silent, and at rest, sure and discrete hands will lower them to the earth, and the mute tombs will enclose their insensible corpses forever.

SWEYN. But Queen Emma will surely inquire about her sons. Many know that the princes are on their way to Winchester.

GODWIN. My dear Sweyn, all this has been foreseen. Queen Emma is still at her summer castle. She does not expect her sons before eight days. I know well that they will be missed, but who can say that I or thou art the cause of it. Moreover, the King Hardicanute shall be dead. What can prevent us from prudently turning the tide of suspicion on his memory? He will not leave the tomb to justify himself. Think not, dear Sweyn, that during my thirty years sojourn amongst kings, breathing the mighty atmosphere of the court, I have learned nothing in this cunning school of duplicity. Of course thou understandest well that I cannot openly appear in this affair. I must stand aloof, to prevent all suspicion. I will shed tears over the sad lot of these young and unfortunate princes, and order minute researches to be made for the infamous murderers, but thou hast nothing to fear, my dear Sweyn, I will protect thee under the mantle of my power. Now, Sweyn, I rely on thy usual prudence and intelligence in this business. Remember, if thou succeed, thou shalt be liberally rewarded, if the affair fail, 'tis exile for me, and death for thee. Be a man Sweyn as thou always art.

SWEYN. My Lord, since there is no alternative, I am ready.

GODWIN. Good! Good! by these words, thou art truly Sweyn.

SWEYN. What must be done?

GODWIN. The princes arrive this evening, and thou shalt receive them in the eastern room of the castle. Let no one see them. They will rest in the adjoining room, and the parlor will be at their disposal. Now listen well Sweyn, shortly before midnight, men of action will be there. Thou wilt give them instructions, and at midnight, all must be over. Then for years to come shall I, GODWIN, without fear nor rival, be ruler of England and thou shalt be *second man* of the kingdom. Dost thou understand?

SWEYN. My lord, thy orders shall be executed to the letter.

GODWIN. Thou art a man of heart, Sweyn. Be prudent, be courageous, but above all, be prompt. I will assist thee in the good work, though I must do so secretly. Good evening my dear Sweyn—Good evening. *(exit)*

SWEYN. *(alone, looking after him)* My dear Sweyn—dear Sweyn—Ah, I know, villain how thou lovest me. I know thy tenderness, hypocrite! From the bottom of thy black heart thou designest upon me. Thou usest me as a vile instrument in the working out thy base and cowardly crimes, and when I shall no longer be of any use to thy perversity, thou wilt cast me aside as a useless tool. Thou lovest but the pomp and greatness of kingly grandeur. Thou esteemest but thy power; ambition devours thee. Thou art a man without feeling, a demon in human form; in whose breast, beats not a heart of flesh and blood, but a viper, whose every movement, is a sting of deadly guile. *(Hears noise)* Ah! who comes here? Leofric? Seward? *(enter Leofric and Seward)* All hail to our noble counts of Leicester and Northumberland? What service might I have the pleasure of rendering to my lords?

LEOFRIC. The news is spread far and wide, that the king is on his death-bed, and it is our duty to see him a last time before he dies. Have we come too late?

SWEYN. The king is still alive, but in very low condition. The physicians say he will not see to-morrow's sun.

SEWARD. So! we desire most ardently to see him. Dost thou think he will receive us?

SWEYN. He never receives visitors at midday. Still he may make an exception to this general rule for your lordships. Be

seated, and I will inquire if the noble counts Leofric and Seward may be introduced to his majesty's presence. *(exit)*

SEWARD. Count of Leicester, England is very ill. She also has her bed of suffering. Mourning and sorrow cover the land.

LEOFRIC. What meanest thou, thane of Northumberland?

SEWARD. Ah, Leofric, call me not thane. It is a Danish title, which is odious to my ears. Call me by the Saxon title. Say earl or count, but never thane.

LEOFRIC. Well, then, count of Northumberland, explain thy meaning.

SEWARD. I mean to say that Briton sighs under a domination, without glory, and without honor.

LEOFRIC. Rather say under the tryanny of a degenerated Saxon. Under the rule of a traitor, a usurper, under a Godwin.

SEWARD. True, Hardicanute reigns, but it is Godwin that governs; and to make matters worse, at the king's death, we find at our head a child of eight years, which means, a continuation of Godwin's reign of tyranny. How unfortunate for us that England should be abandoned as a prey to those who hate us. The people are crushed under the weight of heavy taxes.

LEOFRIC. Ah, Seward—would that those happy days of yore came back to England. Would that that royal family of our own Saxon blood could return, with her pious kings who were not only faithful rulers, but even fathers of the people.

SEWARD. Let us hope, Leofric, that our noble princes, Edward and Alfred, may escape the danger which must inevitably follow them during their intended visit, and that heaven may provide means to restore them to the throne of their ancestors.

LEOFRIC. Yes, yes my lord, and if occasion present itself, let us not hesitate to offer the tribute of our courage, and the strength of our vows and of our words.

SWEYN. *(enter)* Pardon me my lords, the king is extremely weak, and orders are given that no visitors shall be admitted.

LEOFRIC. And when may we return?

SWEYN. Towards evening. At five o'clock the good bishop Brithowald will come to administer to him the last rites of Holy Church. You may both enter with him.

(exit LEOFRIC and SEWARD.)

SWEYN. *(looking after them)* Go noble lords. To see and hear you, convinces me of your real worth. You are the true nobles

of the kingdom. How happy must be your subjects. Your hands and hearts are not stained with the damnable intrigues of iniquity. Ah, Godwin, powerful Godwin, to what littleness thou art reduced when compared with these great nobles of the land. Cursed be the day I united my lot with yours. But why could I not quit this life of iniquity and torment—why not return to my life of former days to some peaceful retreat in the solitary country. Oh, for the tranquil evenings spent at the family hearth! where life becomes a charm, and conscience finds repose? Alas, this is impossible. 'Tis too late. Godwin, thou hast bound me in thy infernal net, as the hunter does to his imprudent prey. And in return! Alas the constant fear of prison, and of death haunts me, at every step. Ah, but what am I saying! Am I a fool? Courage my heart, the cup is filled, it must be drunk to the dregs.

Enter Ceowulf and Synewulf.

SWEYN. Who are you?

CEOWULF. Malefactors, my lord.

SYNEWULF. Murderers.

SWEYN. Whence come you?

CEOWULF. From an obscure grotto on the mountain side.

SYNEWULF. From the jaws of hell.

SWEYN. Who has sent you here?

CEOWULF. One more wicked than thou, my lord.

SYNEWULF. A damned soul, which you know better than we.

SWEYN. Are you able to execute an infernal act, such as only Satan himself could accomplish?

CEOWULF. Oh, yes, my lord, if we are well paid for the work.

SYNEWULF. If the recompense is in keeping with the deed.

SWEYN. I will give a pound of gold to each of you.

CEOWULF. Good! what is to be done?

SWEYN. (*hesitating*) Murder two children.

SYNEWULF. Oh, that is a mere trifle. Where shall we find them.

SWEYN. At the eastern room in the castle at midnight. You will enter by the door in the rear of the garden. Remember, at midnight.

CEOWULF. And what after.

SWEYN. Come without noise to that apartment, and you will find in the adjoining room two youths. Use your poignards

surely, but above all, quickly. Let not a sound be heard, no moan, not even a murmur.

CEOWULF. And the bodies, what shall be done with them?

SWEYN. You will find stairs to the left of the corridor which lead to the basement of the castle. There a grave is dug, lay the corpses in this and cover them all.

CEOWULF. And the reward?

SWEYN. You shall have it when the deed is done.

SYNEWULF. Well said, 'tis just.

SWEYN. At midnight, remember. If you act quickly, and with precision, your recompense will be double.

CEOWULF. The devil himself is not more generous my lord.

SYNEWULF. Satan is not greater.

(exit CEOWULF and SYNEWULF.)

SWEYN. *(alone)* What incarnate demons! Did ever men speak of murder as did these scoundrels. Crime seems to have been their habitual atmosphere. But say, which of us is the worst, he who plots crime, or he who commits it? Which is the more culpable, the hand which strikes, or the hand that orders the stroke. Godwin! Godwin, thou art more infamous than both these wretches, Sweyn, thy soul is blacker than the souls of these two murderers. Oh! my head! my head! away dismal thoughts, away hideous cries of conscience. Conscience, Ha! ha! ha! what is conscience?—away with conscience—Oh, God, I am becoming an abomination, even to myself.—*(falls on chair)*

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE—*Room in Castle—well furnished.*

(*Enter LEOFRIC, SEWARD and other LORDS with attendants and pages.*)

SEWARD. We have arrived at least half an hour before the time appointed, my lords, let us hope not to be disappointed this time.

LEOFRIC. The good bishop, Brithowald, will come and join us soon. I am anxious to see him.

OSWALDUS. He is a friend of thy youth?

LEOFRIC. We studied together in our youth; again we were together at the court of Ethelred.

SEWARD. They say he is a great servant of God.

LEOFRIC. He is a saint, Seward, a true saint, a man of retreat, silence, mortification, and prayer. His virtues have won for him the confidence of the Danish court. Still, he has never been known to flatter with vain complaisance, the power of our new masters, he has remained frankly and sincerely a Briton. It was he, who poured the waters of baptism on the head of Edward.

HAROLD. By the way, Leofric, hast thou heard the rumor that the Saxon princes, Edward and Alfred, will shortly visit Winchester.

LEOFRIC. Yes, and moreover, I am secretly assured that they have already embarked at Dover.

SEWARD. What signifies that secret? What thinkest thou of such news? In the castle, we see no preparations made for their reception.

LEOFRIC. The sickness of the king, and the mourning of the courtiers, may in part explain this strange indifference.

WILLIAM. Yes, but the Queen is still at her country villa, taking baths at the seaside. If the news be true, it seems to me that her place would be here to receive her children. But, stranger than all, explain why the Queen is not at the bedside of her dying son, to receive his last words and sighs. What dost thou say to all this, Count of Leicester?

LEOFRIC. In truth it is very mysterious.

OSWALDUS. Godwin is able to do anything to gain his end.

LEOFRIC. My lords, it may be that Providence has sent us here to be of service to those we love.

SEWARD. God will it! For my part, you cannot believe how happy I would be to meet our young princes while I am at Winchester. I never had the happiness of seeing them. I was too young to associate with people of the court when the Danish invasion took place on our English shore. But, venerable count, thou knowest these sons of our King?

LEOFRIC. Yes, most assuredly I know them. I held them over the baptismal font. I rocked them in their infancy, and protected them in their flight. Two years after, I had the happiness of seeing them again, and the memory of that visit revives in me the ardor of my youth, and makes me despise the slowness and fatigues of old age. I yearn to see them again, and once more press them to my heart, before I die.

OSWALDUS. How have they turned out?

LEOFRIC. Perfect gentlemen, beautiful in body, bright in intellect, and noble of heart. Edward, above all, is distinguished by a pleasing majestic appearance, and an imposing air of distinction. He is the king.

WILLIAM. Yes, yes, he is the king of the faithful Britons, he is the king of the Saxons, he is our king. Without doubt, Richard of Normandy has given his nephews an education worthy of their birth?

LEOFRIC. A princely and royal education. During the three months that I stayed at the court of Rouen, I learned to admire and love the spirit of chivalry, and the angelic piety of our young Saxon princes. Edward, above all, edified me by the eminence of his virtue. He has learned to preserve his innocence against the despoiling examples of the society of the great. Purity shines on his forehead, and in his looks. He loves to frequent churches, and passes in them entire hours with the greatest delight.

SEWARD. What serious tastes in a young man of eighteen.

LEOFRIC. In fact, his wisdom and gravity are above his years. He is distinguished by an admirable meekness, a profound humility, and a charity which embraces all men. He has a horror of ambition and he hates flattery.

HAROLD. It is a David or a Solomon that God has reserved to cause his Holy law to flourish in our turbulent times.

LEOFRIC. Oh, how happy would England be if she could see such a prince ascend the throne of his ancestors, and rule over her destinies. (*looks left*) Silence! Sweyn comes. (*enter SWEYN.*)

SWEYN. My lords, it is time to enter, his Lordship has arrived.

LEOFRIC. Many thanks my good Sweyn, may the peace of God be with you. (*exit LEOFRIC and SEWARD.*)

SWEYN. (*alone, looking after them*) Peace, peace, (*up stage.*) there is no longer any peace for my guilty soul, I know but tortures, troubles, fears, agitations, and remorse—Alas! When once we step on the incline of vice, a first step leads us to a second, a second to a third, and thus it is till the bottom of the abyss has been reached—I have consented to be an instrument in the rascality of Godwin. First step: I have given to the murderers their infernal instructions. Second step: In an instant, in face of the victims I shall assume the garb of a hypocrite, preparing in secret the stroke that will cut them off in the flower of their age, and at midnight the bottom of the gulf shall be reached, and hell itself shall cry in terror. The young princes will be struck within the walls of this very palace. In an instant: Oh! infernal suffering. (*enter PAGE.*)

PAGE. My lord, Redwald is without and wishes to speak to thee, with him are two strangers.

SWEYN. Show them to this room immediately. (*exit PAGE*) I must hide my poignard, I must have upon my lips but smiling words. Ah, Godwin! infernal serpent!—Oh, how hard it is to be the tool of a murderer. But here are the princes.

(*EDWARD and ALFRED enter conducted by REDWALD.*)

SWEYN. Honor to your highnesses, my lords. You are without doubt the princes of Normandy, who are expected this evening.

EDWARD. Yes, my lord. May we see our mother?

SWEYN. Redwald, we wish to be alone. (*exit REDWALD*) What do your highnesses desire?

EDWARD. We desire to see our mother, the Queen.

SWEYN. Queen Emma, is not at Winchester, she is in the country.

EDWARD. We would be pleased to see our brother, King Hardicanute.

SWEYN. The king at this hour has returned to his apartments, he has given orders to allow no person to enter.

EDWARD. Then, may we see the regent of the kingdom, the powerful and noble Count of Kent?

SWEYN. The Count of Kent is seriously occupied. He cannot be seen to-day.

EDWARD. We may then see no one?

SWEYN. Not this evening.

ALFRED. This is quite incomprehensible.

SWEYN. My honored princes, these shall be your apartments, this room will be at your disposal, and the adjoining room is a bedroom, in which you will find all that is necessary for the night's repose. You will pardon me an instant, my noble princes, while I give orders to bring your supper here. (*exit SWEYN.*)

ALFRED. What a reception; oh, my brother, what a reception. Truly this is a pleasing arrival in the castle of our mother. What sayest thou, Edward. There is crime in the air; everywhere on our passage we have met but hateful faces and hearts of marble.

EDWARD. This servant, however, endeavors to treat us with politeness.

ALFRED. Yes, but did you not remark, Edward, that his words were short and few? And how cold they fell upon my poor heart, as so many weights of lead; his eye dared not meet ours: one would say, that in the depth of his soul, a bad or murderous design was holding sway.

EDWARD. My dear Alfred, be calm, give no heed to these evil apprehensions. Permit not thyself to go to such extremities in thy sorrow.

ALFRED. We reckoned on a cordial welcome, on a reception full of tenderness and affection; we expected to be awaited with open arms and with true transports of joy and happiness. It was very natural that it should be thus, after so many years of separation, after the pains and fatigues of such a journey. And behold, our mother is absent, our brother is hidden from us and Godwin is declared invisible. Is it not evident that all this has been done to ignore our presence? Everywhere we find ourselves in silence, coldness, indifference and solitude. My brother, doubt not, there is crime lurking in the air.

EDWARD. For the love of heaven, Alfred, be calm.

ALFRED. Are these apartments appropriate for noble princes? A miserable parlor, and beyond a small room where a ray of

light seldom enters, a bed for two persons with very poor furniture. In all sincerity, is this the way to receive distinguished guests? The sons of the Queen of England, brothers of the reigning king? Why are we not admitted in the royal banquet hall? Why are we not allowed to take our meals in company with the lords of the court? Why do they bring our repasts here, as to criminals and prisoners? Are we in the castle of our mother, or in the dungeon of a traitor? What sayest thou, my brother?

EDWARD. I say that sorrow agitates thy mind, and thou dost exaggerate the horrors of our position.

ALFRED. Edward, dissimulate no longer, why harbor in the secrets of our hearts those thoughts which, since many days, excite both of us? Why do we not openly say what we secretly think. We are surrounded by traitors; treason hangs over our heads everywhere.

EDWARD. Be not so excited Alfred, do not speak with accents so strong and violent. These very walls may have eyes to see our very movements, and ears to understand our words.

ALFRED. Ah, thou thyself, dear brother, feelest that we are not free in this place. We have been prisoners since we have landed on England's shore. We fell into the hands and the pretended protection of Redwald. He did not leave us for a single moment. On approaching Winchester, to our great surprise, there came no message from the king, and no letter from our mother, the Queen. They introduced us into the interior of the castle, with the greatest secrecy, we see no friendly look, and hear no word of welcome. And now alone we are confined within the four dark walls of this black room, as between the four boards of a coffin. That coldness crushes me, Edward, the atmosphere seems charged with mystery. I breathe with difficulty.—I am suffocating—Edward.

EDWARD. (*aside*) Alas, the child is not mistaken, but what use is there in augmenting his fears. (*aloud*) Alfred, I agree with you that we might have expected a different reception, still I do not think it prudent to abandon ourselves to such painful suspicions and excessive fears. In the midst of these people of the north, surrounded by Danish customs and manners, we cannot expect politeness, delicate attention and polished manners as of the court of Normandy and of France. Let us await with patience

our good mother's return, the night may drive away these dark clouds of doubt and uneasiness, and the brilliant sun of to-morrow will bring hope and confidence, and joy. What interest would they have in persecuting us?

ALFRED. What interest? Edward, thy mind, so clear, has already answered a similar question. Are we not the sons of Ethelred. Art thou not the natural and presumptive heir to the throne? More than one might be interested in your disappearance. I know Edward, it is thy great charity which causes thee to forgive the dishonest conduct of our persecutors. It is thy fraternal love, which has found such a plausible means to calm our inquietudes. I thank thee most cordially for thy good intentions, still thou canst not convince me that we are not fallen into the snares of treason, or some hellish plot.

EDWARD. Well, well, Alfred, let us be reasonable. Thou hast always accorded to my desires, be calm and confident, despair can bring no remedy for the evils of our situation.

ALFRED. Let us fly from this prison, Edward; let us quit this dungeon and return to liberty.

EDWARD. But where shall we go?

ALFRED. It matters little where—in the solitude of the desert, in the depth of the woods, in the peasant's cottage, in any place we would be in greater security than here.

EDWARD. We cannot hide ourselves from our enemies. Moreover, would you cause uneasiness to our friends in Normandy.

ALFRED. Let us go to Dover, take passage aboard any boat sailing for the continent.

EDWARD. It is impossible Alfred, be assured that all these routes are guarded.

ALFRED. Then let us fly to the house of counts Seward and Leofric, they always told us that they were faithful and devoted friends of the family.

EDWARD. Also impossible, Leofric and Seward dwell very far from Winchester. If what you apprehend be true, there is no doubt the entrances of the castle are well guarded. We would be arrested in our flight, we would thus excite the animosity of our enemies, and furnish them with a pretext to justify their perverse intentions.

ALFRED. Oh, my God, what shall we do? On every side I see but frightful dangers, my God; my God, protect us.

EDWARD. Yes, my dear brother, in this difficult situation, God is our only help, our only refuge. Let us throw ourselves with confidence into the hands of His mercy. He is the Father of the Orphan. He knows how to bridle the fury of the wicked, everything that happens through the hands of His goodness is calculated for our greater good. He has not abandoned us so far, why then to-day do we doubt His ineffable love and His protection. Come let us retire for a short time to that room and with all the fervor of our souls, submit to our celestial Father the object of our pains and the perils of our present situation.

ALFRED. You are right Edward, let us go and pray; prayer will lighten the weight that rests on my poor afflicted heart.

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

EDWARD AND ALFRED.

SCENE—*Room in the Castle, same as Act II*—ALFRED *sitting on lounge to R., EDWARD beside him.*

ALFRED. I feel much better now; my soul is calm; prayer has soothed my bleeding heart.

EDWARD. Yes, dear brother, prayer is a supernatural and divine balm, capable of relieving the acutest sorrows and of healing the deepest wounds.

ALFRED. In the midst of my transports of excitement, and in the impossibility of saying anything else, I simply repeated the sweet name of our Lord, and each time it seemed to me that I breathed more easily. Truly, it was as if I had lifted a great weight off my soul.

EDWARD. The name of the Lord, as you see, is all-powerful. At this name every knee in heaven, upon earth, and under the earth must bend.—Let us not seek our happiness here below in any other name. Its sound is sweet melody to the ear, and jubilation to the heart; and Its sweetness equals Its power.

ALFRED. Thanks, my brother, thanks, your words do me good. They fall on my soul like the gentle morning dew on the withered flowers.

EDWARD. It is getting late Alfred—we must think of retiring for the night.

ALFRED. Yes, yes, very soon. It is really extraordinary how I dread sleep to-night. Let us converse yet a while. At this hour, Edward, what, thinkest thou, our cousins are doing in Normandy.

EDWARD. They are united without doubt, in the large hall, around the blazing hearth, taking their evening recreation.

ALFRED. Oh! yes, I see them ranged in a restful semi-circle around our uncle Richard, so good, so pleasing. They believe us happy here, embraced by motherly tenderness, surrounded by all the glitters of the court, and passing agreeable, pleasant hours in distractions and rejoicings unceasingly renewed. Oh, cruel derision, they have not the faintest thought that we are prisoners, between four somber walls, watching alone in this pale flickering

light. Oh, Edward! it is sorrowful, it is strangely sorrowful. (*covers face with hands and bursts into tears.*)

EDWARD. (*with tenderness*) My brother, place thy confidence in God. Better days are awaiting us.

ALFRED. Better days are awaiting us? Better days? Wilt thou permit me to communicate to thee a thought which haunts me for sometime, and which I dared not tell to thee?

EDWARD. Speak, my brother, I will listen to thee.

ALFRED. Since the vessel landed us on the shores of England, hast thou not thought, Edward, that we are in the rightful possessions of our father, and that thou art the legitimate heir to this kingdom?

EDWARD. That thought sometimes comes to my mind, but I never allow myself to dwell upon it.

ALFRED. Why? brother.

EDWARD. Ambition exercises no power on my heart, Alfred.

ALFRED. Just think of it, Edward. It should be very pleasing to be at the head of a great people.

EDWARD. There is in such happiness more deception than reality. Royalty carries with it duties of great responsibilities and incessant cares. The vicious air of the court is contrary to the development of virtue. Vice is here represented under a thousand different seductive forms, and on every side are obstacles to faith and good morals. We have every reason to thank God that we have spent our youthful days away from the court. Happy is the man who knows how to live happily and contented in a humble private position. By these means he can aspire to a heavenly throne.

ALFRED. I often heard it said that thy modesty and moderation rendered thee worthy of the throne, Edward.

EDWARD. Well, well, thou art allowing your imagination full play. Let us go to our room and take the rest we so badly need. May thy sleep be all of happy dreams. (*aside*) On the contrary, I fear, Alfred, horrible dreams, Alfred, I feel the weight of this sorrowful day; my mind figures murder, treason, poison, and blood.

ALFRED. Let us go. May God protect and watch over us. (*Exeunt, entering their room, SWEYN enters softly.*)

SCENE II.

SWEYN. (*alone*) Yes, may God protect you; may he watch over you—Poor innocent victims—You are destined, never more to leave that room alive. The murderer's hand shall send you to a better world. Your corpses will pass from here to the cold, damp grave. But your souls, immaculate and pure, shall fly towards the abode of God. Behind that secret window, I heard their tender conversation. Can there be found nobler sentiments, more generous ideas, intellects more elevated, and hearts more loving? Ah! it requires one as wicked as thou, Godwin, to attack (*lightning through the window*) these inoffensive creatures. What a storm (*looks through window*). Nature herself seems in desolation. Roll on, ye thunders of the clouds, flash on, thou lightning of the firmament. Strike the earth with your inflammable bolts! Blow on, ye winds, and lay desolation in your trail. Oh! all you mad elements, unite your forces to raze this accursed castle from the earth, for, in an instant, under its very roof, shall be committed the foulest deed that ever stained the pages of history. Poor princes, you sleep calm and tranquil on the verge of the tomb. I am sworn to destroy you, and yet, I esteem you—I admire you; ay, I love you: Yes, yes, live, live. Why not open the cage, and the birds will fly away? Why cannot I fly with them into Normandy? No, It is too late. The assassins who shall be here in a moment would give the alarm: Godwin arrest us, and it would be my death! But is not death preferable to this miserable existence devoured by remorse, and despair? No! no! I do not wish to die. It is too terrible to fall into the hands of an avenging God. I love you, young princes, but I love better my life. Roll on, oh, thunders! burst, ye bolts of heaven! and lightning flash, rage, oh, tempest! in vain will you rival the tempest of my soul. Oh! my God! I am falling into the abyss of despair. Save me! Oh, save the princes! (*Murderers appear*) Alas, the die is cast. 'Tis too late. Here come those demons in human form. (*CEOWULF and SYNEWULF enter*)—Ah, you are come.

CEOWULF. 'Tis midnight.

SYNEWULF. We are always faithful to our promises.

CEOWULF. Do we strike immediately?

SWEYN. (*going in haste to the door*) No, delay a moment! I will go to the castle cellar. It is there you shall carry the

bodies. All the doors shall be open. Strike—quickly, and strong; above all let not a single moan escape the victims. *(exit)*

CEOWULF. *(looking after him—Storm continues)* Go!—be at ease, my lord.

SYNEWULF. Fear nothing, our hands are steady and sure. *(looking after him.)*

CEOWULF. *(looking out through the window)* What a beautiful night, Synewulf, for men of our profession.

SYNEWULF. It is a night as made to order! ha! ha! ha!

CEOWULF. It is really fine, the wind twists and tears the trees from the mountain side.

SYNEWULF. The rain comes down in torrents through the rocks.

CEOWULF. A thunderbolt passed my head, as we entered the castle, and nearly crushed me to the earth.

SYNEWULF. Two feet from me the lightning struck a knotted oak.

CEOWULF. The serpentine lightning plows the heavy clouds.

SYNEWULF. What a beautiful night!

CEOWULF. Men tremble and hide themselves; we have full sway in such a weather. The wolf leaves the woods; bears quit their dens, for they can in all security devour the timid lambs. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

SYNEWULF. Still, I have a presentiment that we will not succeed to-night.

CEOWULF. Ah! a presentiment?

SYNEWULF. This evening an owl, flying through the raging storm, did not cease screeching in piercing tones.

CEOWULF. Bah, bah? Leave these omens to the fearful. Let us defy the wind and the storm. Thou wilt see, that in our hands, these children will pass from this life as easily as timid doves *(bell strikes twelve)* Comrade, the time of action has come; midnight strikes in the Cathedral tower. I will remain at the door; go in and see if the princes are asleep. If they are awake, tell them that you were sent there by Sweyn. If they want anything, then we shall put off the stroke to a later hour *(Synewulf enters in the room)*. A raven, an owl screeching; a bad omen. Still I will not let these things frighten me. *(SYNEWULF returns.)*

SYNEWULF. They sleep; oh, friend, what a sorrowful sight.

CEOWULF. What now, thou appearest overcome.

SYNEWULF. They sleep, their white innocent faces calm as children in the cradle. The feeble light of the candle seems to surround them with a halo of glory. They hold each other by the hand, and the head of the younger rests on the breast of the other. The sweet smile on their lips seems to say that these are not victims intended for the slaughter. Go thyself, and see the touching spectacle.

CEOWULF. What! Is thy courage leaving thee? Art thou decided not to strike?

SYNEWULF. Yes, if thou wishest, Ceowulf?

CEOWULF. Has thy courage already given way?

SYNEWULF. The tiger sometimes respects its prey, and spares its victims.

CEOWULF. And the pound of gold?

SYNEWULF. Pshaw, gold, gold; we have enough of gold. We can earn it in a thousand other circumstances.

CEOWULF. See here Synewulf, I no longer know thee. Art thou not ashamed of thyself. Thou speakest like a timid fool.

SYNEWULF. (*angrily*) My arm, Ceowulf, is always good and ready, but for this time I must confess I would prefer——

CEOWULF. Here, here, courage, to work. Strike the younger. Place one hand on the mouth and with the other drive the dagger through the heart. Come! (*they enter; immediately cries of "murder" are heard, then deep moaning, the two assassins rush upon the scene*).

CEOWULF. Thou coward! a curse on thee; the stroke is missed.

SYNEWULF. Let us fly, quick, let us fly!

CEOWULF. Mine has received a mortal wound, what hast thou done wretch?

SYNEWULF. My hand trembled, my strength left me.

CEOWULF. Now if we are caught, thou wilt be to blame.

SYNEWULF. Cruel demon; say rather it is thy fault! why didst thou not obey my counsel?

CEOWULF. Counsels of a cowardly fool, let us go. In the grotto we shall settle this affair.

SYNEWULF. No, here if thou wish. (*CEOWULF and SYNEWULF go out. EDWARD and ALFRED appear. ALFRED holds a sword in his hand.*)

ALFRED. Where are you, cowardly assassins? Where are you? Ah! if I could only find you.

EDWARD. Stop my brother!

ALFRED. You choose for your time of attack the darkness of night—you hid in the shades, you cowards.

EDWARD. My brother Alfred!

ALFRED. You waited until we were buried in the arms of slumber. I repeat it; you are cowards.

EDWARD. My dear brother, see how thou stagger'st, thou art wounded, thou art wounded.

ALFRED. I am wounded? ah, truly. Art thou also wounded, brother.

EDWARD. No.

ALFRED. God's will be blessed.

EDWARD. I was awake in time to prevent the blow through my heart.

ALFRED. It is thy life they seek above all, be assured, my brother.

EDWARD. Alfred, take a seat, and let me wipe away the blood which flows from thy wound.

ALFRED. Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing, only a slight wound. I feel no pain.

EDWARD. Permit me to examine. Thou must not wait too long before having it bandaged.

ALFRED. I told thee that treason hangs over our heads.

EDWARD. Alas, it is too true. My dear brother, pardon, pardon, if I hurt you. You must be seated. (*he takes him by the hand.*)

ALFRED. I obey, I obey. Oh, how weak I am, my sight becomes dim—objects are fading away—I see nothing. Brother, where art thou?

EDWARD. Here at thy side, be not afraid; I will not leave thee.

ALFRED. I am becoming weak!—I am going!—Oh!—My brother!—(*faints.*)

EDWARD. (*wipes away the blood*) Poor brother, how pale—he has lost so much blood. He rests!—Thank my God! That rest will tranquilize his agitated mind—the wound is so deep. The assassins aimed at his heart. If there were only some one here to dress his wound. Oh, my guardian angel, be thou my help in this hour of need. (*he then kisses him*) Rest in peace dear

Alfred, I would I were in thy place (*places a damp handkerchief about his head*). Who knows but the assassins are in the adjoining room awaiting an occasion to renew their attack? Dear friends in Normandy, what would you say if you saw us thus!

ALFRED. (*awaking*) Edward, Edward! where art thou?

EDWARD. Here, here, my brother, near thee.

ALFRED. Edward what is the meaning of this. What are these walls—where are we?

EDWARD. In our little parlor near our bedroom.

ALFRED. Oh, yes, it is true, I am ill, Edward. What is the meaning of these things.

EDWARD. It is a bandage, my brother.

ALFRED. Who made this wound?

EDWARD. A bad man. Dost thou not remember?

ALFRED. Oh, yes, yes, I remember. Where is uncle Richard?

EDWARD. (*distracted*) In his room. It is late, near midnight. Try to sleep, Alfred that will do thee good.—(*silence*)

ALFRED. We shall go soon to see our mother—Emma? Oh, what happiness! (*starts*) What is the meaning of those daggers?

EDWARD. Thou art feverish. Dost thou wish to drink?

ALFRED. Yes, I would like it very much.

EDWARD. (*aside*) Alas, I have only cold water to give him.

(ALFRED *drinks*.)

ALFRED. Thanks, thanks, oh best of brothers. This is a delicious cider, fresh from Normandy. But what do I see—A prison! A dungeon—(*excitedly*) They wish to assassinate my brother.

EDWARD. (*holding ALFRED's hands*) Alfred, chase away these dark images, thou hast a nightmare.

ALFRED. A nightmare? But I am not dreaming. I see before me, a king—a bishop—two noble lords, Leofric and Seward,—Edward, my brother holding a scepter—It is beautiful—Oh, how beautiful.

EDWARD. Come, come, my God protect us for the remainder of the night. Keep us from the hands of those cruel assassins. (*they exit to their bedroom and SWEYN arrives.*)

SWEYN. Hell is in my heart—I will no longer shut that door. I will let them escape if they wish. Oh, thank heaven, the princes have not fallen under the hands of the assassins. I have seen all, I heard all—would that Alfred's wound were not mortal. Oh

wretch, that I am, to consent to go on, from crime to crime, to accumulate remorse upon remorse. In the obscure cellars of the castle, through the thick darkness, I seemed to see, at every instant, eyes of fire darting at me. I trembled in all my limbs; a cold sweat ran down my forehead. Ah! 'twas the eye of God, penetrating, even into the darkest recesses of my soul. Godwin, thou canst damn thyself if thou wilt and live in the midst of assassins and demons; I will fly from thy murderous den; I will return to some solitary place and there do penance.

(*enter GODWIN.*)

GODWIN. Ceowulf has told me all; the princes have escaped.

SWEYN. Yes, my lord, but adieu, I leave thee.

GODWIN. Where art thou going?

SWEYN. To the other extremities of the world. I cannot live here. This life of crime kills me.

GODWIN. Sweyn, do not fill thy mind with absurd imaginations.

SWEYN. My lord?

GODWIN. Remain here and finish the work begun. Dost thou wish thy head to fall with the heads of the princes?

SWEYN. My lord, thou dost not know how good they are. They are not the least ambitious. Thou hast no reason to fear them.

GODWIN. Oh, Sweyn, thou must not judge by appearances.

SWEYN. But thou seest that heaven is against us.

GODWIN. Ha! ha! heaven! why heaven is for those who know how to help themselves.—The king has just died, and I am Suenon's tutor.

SWEYN. The king dead.

GODWIN. Yes he died at midnight, at the very hour when the daggers were to fall on Edward and Alfred—But if the daggers did not do their duty; poison will.

SWEYN. Poison!

GODWIN. Yes, poison. Listen, I will expose to thee another project which thou must execute.

SWEYN. (*starting, looking about frightened*) My lord, hast thou heard nothing?

GODWIN. I hear the wind against the windows.

SWEYN. Thou hearest not voices outside.

GODWIN. No, no, Sweyn now be calm, and listen well to my instructions. The princes are under thy care. No one must be allowed to see them; thou wilt sympathise with them in their sufferings, feign indignation at the murderous attempt to kill them. But, at the same time, thou wilt prepare for them their last beverage,—and death shall be the consequence. Dost thou understand?

SWEYN. (*hesitates*) I will obey. (*aside*) Alas! alas! for my misfortune, he fascinates me like a viper, he magnetizes the weak bird he would devour. (*to GODWIN*) I will obey, my lord.

GODWIN. Well, well my dear Sweyn, thou art a man.

SWEYN. (*starting and listening*) My lord, didst thou understand those words?

GODWIN. No.

SWEYN. I thought I heard some one saying—thou shalt sleep no more.—Sweyn kills sleep. Sweet sleep the balm of wounded souls.

GODWIN. These are foolish imaginations; do not think of these things, Sweyn.

SWEYN. Listen! listen! Dost thou not hear resounding in all parts of the house, Sweyn, no longer any sleep! Sweyn has killed sleep! Ceowulf has killed sleep! Godwin shall sleep no more!

GODWIN. Retire Sweyn, go to rest, till thy mind regain its ordinary state of tranquility. To-morrow, thou shalt be better able to do the good work.

SWEYN. (*in a distracted manner*) To-morrow. Oh, yes, to-morrow! what new crime must be committed to-morrow? Poison the princes!—is that not so?

GODWIN. Yes, but I must speak with them before the work is done. Edward must give me in writing a complete resignation of his rights to the crown of England, in favor of his young step-brother.

SWEYN. If he must die, of what benefit shall be the resignation?

GODWIN. Oh, in public affairs we cannot be too careful. Our precautions must be taken. It is always good to have two cords to your bow. If he die, the resignation will not be useless.

SWEYN. (*returns trembling violently*) Godwin! see them! these hands are stained with blood.

GODWIN. No, no, they are as clean and white as mine.

SWEYN. Yours also, my lord, are dripping with red blood! There is not water enough in all the fountains of Winchester to wash them.

GODWIN. Your head is deranged Sweyn, you have a delirious fever. Go to bed.

SWEYN. See, the dagger!

GODWIN. Where?

SWEYN. There!

GODWIN. I see nothing.

SWEYN. There! there on the wall!

GODWIN. I see nothing on the wall.

SWEYN. See, see that bloody hand! See Godwin!—the long bony blood-stained fingers—See, it is going through the air!—It is coming towards us! Away! help! help! Ah! there it goes—see it traces mysterious words upon the wall! 'Tis the sentence of Belshazzar, read Godwin. "Mane! Thekel! Phares" Ah! it comes again; help, help; I cannot breathe! release thy hold, vile specter. Ah! (*struggles, falls, GODWIN rushes to the door.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE—*Edward and Alfred's bedroom—(Alfred lying on bed—Edward on one knee, and leaning over the bed—both asleep).*

(Enter GODWIN and SWEYN.)

GODWIN. They are asleep *(goes to the table and examines the water in the pitcher)*. This will answer the purpose *(hands poison to SWEYN)* pour the poison in this, and then thy work is done. Be quick before the princes awake.

SWEYN. *(looking about in a distracted manner)* Where is the water?

GODWIN. *(taking him by the arm and leading him to the table)* Here, here, Sweyn before thee on the table.

SWEYN. *(advances—recoils in horror—drops phial)* No! No! 'Tis blood!—*(rushes in horror to the door, exit.)*

GODWIN. Coward!—*(picks up the phial and pours poison in water.)*

EDWARD. *(awakes and looks around)* Who art thou?

GODWIN. All hail to my noble prince.

EDWARD. Thou art Godwin, I believe.

GODWIN. Yes prince, moreover I have brought thee here a means of salvation—

EDWARD. A means of salvation! thou art come to free us? Oh! say but the word, Godwin? Say that we are free? My brother Alfred is mortally wounded, and we have no friend here to help us.

GODWIN. Very well, prince, I have here a paper, which contains a resignation of thy rights to the throne of England, and which, if thou sign, thou shalt be free.

EDWARD. *(surprised)* A resignation of my rights to the throne of England?

GODWIN. Thou hast said it, Edward.

EDWARD. I cannot sign such a paper.

GODWIN. I pray thee prince do not slight my good advice; listen to my friendly counsels; sign this document, sign in favor of thy step-brother, Suenon.

EDWARD. Noble Count of Kent, it pains me to repeat: that what thou proposeth is impossible for me to do. I cannot sign.

GODWIN. I know that I require a great sacrifice from thee. I understand, that by this signature thou dost renounce all

thy brilliant and royal aspirations. But before a necessity, personal desires must be overlooked. It is to thy greatest interest prince, that thou sign this resignation.

EDWARD. I have already told thee count, I cannot do so.

GODWIN. My dear Edward, listen to what I have to say, and thou wilt see that reason alone dictates the object of my desires. Thou art surrounded by enemies; thou art on the brink of an abyss of destruction. Despite my vigilance, and many precautions to protect thy person, despite the carefulness of our devoted Sweyn, thou seest that we cannot prevent malignant attempts against thy life. Already vile assassins have introduced themselves even to thy most secret apartments; thy brother is grievously wounded, and thou hast escaped almost miraculously. Thinkest thou thy enemies will stop here? I behold in my mind's eye other misfortunes, more terrible and more deplorable, which, I dare not disclose to thee. Be wise Edward, save thy life, and also that of thy dear little brother.

EDWARD. But what have we done that they should pursue us in this way?

GODWIN. Nothing prince, thou hast done nothing.

EDWARD. Of what then are we guilty?

GODWIN. Of being a king, renounce that royal title, and thou wilt be innocent.

EDWARD. Dost thou think so?

GODWIN. Most certainly. No matter whether it was our late King Hardicanute who sent those murderers to rid him of a rival; or whether the friends of young Suenon, hope to insure by thy death a more peaceful reign for their new king, but what I do know is, that thy days are numbered if thou refuse to sign this document.

EDWARD. And if I sign?

GODWIN. Then all thy anxieties will fade of themselves. Thou wilt have nothing more to fear, and thou shalt recover thy liberty.

EDWARD. We shall be free, my brother and myself?

GODWIN. Yes, and more, I doubt not but that thou wilt be conducted to thy mother, the Queen.

EDWARD. We shall see our mother?

GODWIN. Thou and thy brother wilt see your mother. Thy stay at court will be an uninterrupted succession of feasts, and

happy rejoicings. Thou shalt be honored in a manner befitting thy rank and noble blood. And when thou wishest to return to thy friends in Normandy, thou wilt be free to do so in all liberty and happiness.

EDWARD. Oh, peaceful fields of Normandy, when shall I again behold you, thy brilliant suns, thy pure joys and pleasant scenes!

GODWIN. 'Tis well prince, I see with pleasure that my reasoning has at last convinced thee. Here is the paper, here the pen, sign.

EDWARD. Count of Kent, I repeat, 'tis impossible, I cannot sign.

GODWIN. (*surprised and disappointed*) Thou canst not.

EDWARD. No.

GODWIN. I beseech thee Edward sign immediately, 'tis in the name of liberty, I ask thee to sign.

EDWARD. I cannot.

GODWIN. By the love thou hast of thy dear little brother.

EDWARD. 'Tis impossible.

GODWIN. By the memory thou still preservest of thy dear ones in Normandy.

EDWARD. I cannot, dost thou hear me, Godwin, I cannot.

GODWIN. So save thy life, prince!

EDWARD. I cannot, I must not, nor do I wish to do so.

GODWIN. Thou canst not? Art thou not free to act? What is there to prevent thee.

EDWARD. My country, my duty, my honor and my God. I was born King of England—And I must die King of England.

GODWIN. Thou art King of England.

EDWARD. I am.

GODWIN. Where are thy subjects? Oh, King!

EDWARD. In all parts of the Kingdom, from the Strait of Dover to the mountains of Scotland.

GODWIN. King of England! Where are thy soldiers?

EDWARD. I would have but a word to say, and that word would vibrate to the very extremities of Britain.

GODWIN. Thou hast then come to overthrow the throne of Suenon, and establish thine own upon its ruins?

EDWARD. No, Godwin, a thousand times no!

GODWIN. Then sign.

EDWARD. I cannot. I must not. And I will not.

GODWIN. Thou wilt not! The reason is very evident; thou dost nourish in thy bosom, some secret and ambitious hope. Answer me, prince, is not this the case?

EDWARD. And thou, Count of Kent, answer me in return, am I not the lawful son of Ethelred? Am I not his legitimate heir to the throne of England? Has not an unjust invasion robbed me of my rights to the crown? By what title, then, dost thou, my subject, come here to extort from me, thy King, his sacred rights? Answer me, subject, by what power dost thou these things.

GODWIN. I seek thy dearest interests prince.

EDWARD. Who has charged thee with this work?

GODWIN. My devotion to thy royal person; my undying love for thee.

EDWARD. This is hypocritical devotion: The devotion of a traitor.

GODWIN. (*angrily*) Thou insultest me. 'Tis useless to reason with thee. Listen prince I command thee to sign immediately.

EDWARD. I will not sign. (*ALFRED sits up in the bed and watches with anxiety.*)

GODWIN. Learn wretch that it is *I* who have caused thee to be imprisoned here.

EDWARD. I knew it, before thou saidst it.

GODWIN. Thou art in my power: Thy life is in my hands.

EDWARD. My body is in thy hands; but my soul is free.

GODWIN. Sign, or thou shalt die.

EDWARD. The God of the cross will give me strength to die a martyr.

GODWIN. Never has anyone dared to speak to me thus.

EDWARD. Then thou hast never spoken to a King.

GODWIN. Thou shalt suffer, wretch, for this insolence.

EDWARD. Go! unfaithful subject: Go! finish thy work of crime and iniquity. But remember, there is a God above who watches over the defenceless orphan, and whose punishment even the powerful and crafty cannot escape.

GODWIN. Demons of hell! Satan! furies! help to rid me of this youth who is my torment. (*exit*)

EDWARD. (*alone*) Oh, my God, grant me the strength and courage sufficient to continue firm to the end. I abandon my lot to thy holy will, do with me as you pleasest.

ALFRED. I heard all, Edward. Why didst thou not sign?

EDWARD. Had I thought that such an act would have saved thy life, I would have done so, Alfred.

ALFRED. But I speak for thee Edward, not for myself; to-morrow I shall be no more.

EDWARD. If my lot is determined upon, such base concessions would not soften the cruelty of these tigers.

ALFRED. Who knows Edward, but that they might be moved to compassion.

EDWARD. Moreover, even if such an act would have saved my life, I would never be like Esau, consent to exchange my birthright for a mass of potage. No, Alfred, let us be frank and honest, with all. 'Tis preferable to die with a pure and an untarnished reputation.

ALFRED. I hear noise, Edward—Dost thou not hear some one coming?

EDWARD. Yes.

ALFRED. Perhaps those murderers have come to finish their work. Oh God, come to our assistance. (*enter OSWIN with a bundle of clothes.*)

EDWARD. Who art thou?

OSWIN. One of thy devoted subjects—Oh King.

EDWARD. Thy name?

OSWIN. My name is Oswin.

EDWARD. What wishest thou here?

OSWIN. Take this disguise and fly.

EDWARD. Where shall I fly?

OSWIN. To the country; beyond the city gates.

EDWARD. To whom shall I go?

OSWIN. To my father—To my father's camp.

EDWARD. Who is thy father?

OSWIN. Seward, Count of Northumberland.

EDWARD. Thou art the son of Seward?

OSWIN. Seward is my father.

EDWARD. Give me thy hand. Thou art the son of an honest man, a generous and noble Briton.

ALFRED. Approach son of Seward and let me press thy hand. Thine is the first friendly countenance we have seen since our sojourn in England. 'Tis a ray of light which pierces the somber gloom which surrounds us.

OSWIN. Fly, my princes—In the name of God, put on these clothes, both of you, and fly.

ALFRED. 'Tis impossible for me in my present condition, but for thee Edward, fly and save thy life.

EDWARD. How can we escape from this place?

OSWIN. With this disguise it will be easy. They will think you are servants from the castle. These keys will open the inner doors. The guardian at the outer door has been bribed, and you have nothing to fear. Once outside the castle, you will meet friends who will escort you in safety to my father's camp.

EDWARD. To thy father's camp? Is thy father at war with Winchester?

OSWIN. No, prince. My father with a number of other nobles, among whom is Leofric of Leicester, came here on pressing business. On hearing that your Royal Highness was in danger, they all assembled with their servants and many followers, and have determined to free thee.

ALFRED. But how have they learned that we are helpless prisoners here?

OSWIN. It is not yet known as a certainty. This morning my father sent me at the risk of my life to see if it were true. I left at the dawn of morn, and here I am. But enough of this. We are losing precious time. Go, go and save thyself, my prince.

EDWARD. I cannot abandon my brother.

OSWIN. I have here clothes for both of you.

EDWARD. He is too weak. His wound renders him incapable of flight.

OSWIN. Then I will remain with him. But fly prince; I beseech thee, fly!

EDWARD. I cannot consent to leave thee here in such imminent danger.

OSWIN. There is no danger for me, 'tis thy death they seek. The death of the presumptive heir to the throne of England. And even though there be danger, gladly would I give my life to save that of my King.

EDWARD. Never will I procure my liberty at the cost of a friend's blood.

OSWIN. My liege, thou wouldst not refuse my sword, my courage and even my blood on the field of battle. Why refuse my services now?

EDWARD. I cannot Oswin. Cease to urge me to do such a thing, duty retains me here at my brother's side. Leave us, my brave friend. For my part I must remain.

OSWIN. Then I too will remain, I also have a duty to perform, which is to protect and defend my King. If the assassins come again, 'tis my breast will meet their poignards, or theirs, mine.

ALFRED. Thou art as noble as thou art brave.

EDWARD. Oswin, as thy King, I command thee to return to thy father, and tell him, that I thank him profoundly for his fidelity, but, that my duty to a dying brother, prevents me from yielding to his desires.

OSWIN. Thou commandest me?

EDWARD. As thy King, I command thee.

OSWIN. Then I obey my King.

EDWARD. (*taking his hand*) God will reward thee Oswin, for thy courage and zeal.

OSWIN. May God preserve thee to England, and to the affections of all her subjects.

ALFRED. Adieu! dear Oswin, we will meet again in heaven—
adieu. (*OSWIN exits.*)

ALFRED. Why didst thou not go Edward.

EDWARD. Godwin would have killed thee before the castle fell into our hands.

ALFRED. But what difference would it make; I am destined to die!

EDWARD. Alfred, suppose I had been in thy place, and thou in mine, what wouldst thou have done?

ALFRED. I would never have left thee, brother.

EDWARD. Then the affair finishes here. Let us speak no more about it.

ALFRED. My throat is parching, Edward? This wound gives me such a fever (*drinks*) This water tastes very bad..Brother I feel sick..That water has made me ill..Oh! I am getting weak, brother..I feel dizzy..my whole interior seems about to burst

asunder..something strange is running through my veins..
Edward I have been poisoned.

EDWARD. Poisoned.

ALFRED. Yes, I feel it; the poison is doing its work—Yes, yes,
I am poisoned.

EDWARD. 'Tis the water I gave thee to drink..Alas I should
have known better. My brother is poisoned. Poisoned..and
through my fault.

ALFRED. Be calm Edward, be calm.

EDWARD. Oh, why did the murderer fail in his attempt to
take my life—I would not then have poisoned my brother.
My God, send us help, send us a friend to aid us? Alfred, is
there no means of ejecting these mortal germs of death?

ALFRED. 'Tis too late brother; already the somber veil of
death drops over my eyes. I can see no longer.

EDWARD. Oh, my brother! joy of my days, my life, my only
source of happiness here below, do not leave me, only let me
follow thee to the tomb. My God save him, or take me also!

ALFRED. Edward..give me thy hand..I..thank..thee, for all
the good..counsels..thou hast given me..for..thy good examples
..for thy..charity..I forgive..Godwin..I pardon..the hand..
that struck me..and the hand..that prepared..the poison..I
pardon..all my enemies..thou wilt..give..my last..words..of
love..to our friends in..Normandy..Tell them..how happy..I
would..have been..to see them..before..I..died..adieu..adieu
..Edward adieu..

EDWARD. My brother.

ALFRED. How I would be pleased to have..to have a priest..
to hear my last..confession..my God..forgive me..my sins..
Mary..mother..angels..of heaven, and all ye saints..pray..for
me..Edward..Edward..Pray for me.

EDWARD. May God bless thee my brother, and may he take
thee to His arms.

ALFRED. Amen..My brother..thou..art destined to reign in
the near future..In the..name..of heaven..I beseech..thee..
pursue thy rights..to the throne..of England..Jesus..Jesus..
Mary..Joseph..(*expires.*)

END OF ACT FOURTH.

ACT V.

SCENE—Prison. *Edward seated at table sleeping. Enter Godwin and Synewulf.*

GODWIN. (*holding SYNEWULF by the arm.*) There is the one thou must strike. Your dagger missed him the first time; the poison failed to do the work; but this time there is nothing to prevent thee from striking surely.

SYNEWULF. (*trying to get away.*) But my lord—my hand trembles—I cannot strike him.

GODWIN. Do the deed or thou shalt die in his stead—Ceowulf has done his share; thou must finish him. Choose between life and death. Strike or die.

SYNEWULF. (*after some reflection.*) I will strike—(*Takes his poignard and goes up very slowly behind EDWARD. GODWIN watches him for a while then disappears. EDWARD awakes. SYNEWULF remains in back watching him.*)

EDWARD. Alfred! Oh! Alfred! why art thou not here at my side. How empty the world seems since thou hast left me alone, without thy tender company, in this somber prison, death is preferable to life—Oh, Alfred! Alfred! why hast thou abandoned me? But what do I say! Why should I desire him to linger any longer in this world of misery and tears. He is happy in his abode of heavenly repose. Why dost thou delay Godwin; why not finish thy bloody work and strike this heart as thou didst that of my brother? Ah, Alfred, thou didst say, "I would reign as King of England." Do I resemble a King? cast here in this miserable prison, surrounded by implacable enemies, with death staring me in the face, having but a step to make, to descend in the dark recesses of the grave. (Loud report, just as Synewulf is about to strike; Synewulf drops dagger and escapes; Edward rises suddenly and sees, indistinctly at first, a vision of Alfred surrounded by a light of glory.) Ah, what do I see..what means this light.—How beautiful, how brilliant—Is it thou brother who art come to my obscure dungeon to brighten it with a ray of thy celestial light.—Ah! this thought?—A vow?—Rome?—St. Peters?—Alfred, art thou here. .to whisper to my soul this holy inspiration?—Yes! I will make this vow. (*vision vanishes*) My God, thou seest me deprived of every succor; my friends are far away, and now they seek my soul and my life. But thou, Oh Lord!

thou art the protector of the orphan. In times past thou didst miraculously save Edwin from death and restored him to his kingdom. Thou didst recall from exile that glorious champion, the saintly King Oswald, and by the virtues of the sign of the cross Thou gavest him victory over his enemies. If in like manner thou extend to me, the power of thy protection, and restore to me the throne which is mine, I make, at this moment, Oh, Lord! my God! this solemn vow. Thou wilt be the God of my heart, of my soul, and of my entire being forever. Thy holy Apostle St. Peter, shall be the patron of my choice, and of my kingdom and my people. Moreover, I will make a pilgrimage to the Eternal City and there, prostrate before the tombs of the Apostles, venerate their blessed reliques. Thou art my God, in thee alone I place my confidence.

(*Enter GODWIN, SWEYN, CEOWULF, SYNEWULF.*)

GODWIN. Well, Edward, art thou ready to sign the resignation? Hast thou learned wisdom in thy misfortune?

EDWARD. My misfortunes, as thou callst them, have only served to make me firmer in my refusal to sign.

GODWIN. What! thou art still obstinate! Reflect Edward, do not refuse this last means of salvation. It will soon be too late to accept. Thy refusal will cost thee thy life.

EDWARD. It will then have rid me of a burden, with which I fain would part.

GODWIN. Dost thou know Leofric and Seward——?

EDWARD. I know Leofric.

GODWIN. Has not Leofric written to thee of late?

EDWARD. No, my Lord.

GODWIN. Did he not send a deputy to thee?

EDWARD. No one came to me on the part of Leofric.

GODWIN. Dost thou know that Leofric and Seward have attacked the castle and that both have paid with their lives the penalty of their disloyalty?

EDWARD. My God! Is it possible!

GODWIN. And in an instant if thou continue in thy stubbornness, the same punishment shall fall upon thee.

EDWARD. Then why delay thy murderous designs any longer; my brother is no more; and my friends have left this world; what shall I do here all alone.

GODWIN. Executioners—take him to the place of torture. Pluck out his eyes and pierce his tongue with a hot iron; you will then cut off his right hand, and his left foot, and leave him to die of starvation. (*mockingly*) Hast thou courage to endure all these torments, oh King? Thou art silent, answer.

EDWARD. Such menaces, and such cruelties deserve no answer, Count of Kent.

GODWIN. Away with him, and proceed at once.

EDWARD. My father! forgive them, for they know not what they do!

GODWIN. Ha! ha! ha! console thyself, oh King, with these pious mottoes—We shall see in a moment if they are powerful enough to save thee. Away (*exit* EDWARD, CEOWULF, SYNEWULF.)

GODWIN (*to* SWEYN). Sweyn—see that the work be done quickly—in five minutes he must have ceased to live, and in ten, the tomb must cover his remains. And when the work is over, come immediately and inform me of thy success. (*exit* SWEYN) Ah, Edward, thou shalt know what a Godwin can do to those who resist his power (*calling*) Redwald! Redwald!

(*Enter* REDWALD.)

GODWIN. Go tell Oswald who is in command of our defense, that he must send a deputy to Seward and Leofric, and offer them admittance here, and the liberty of searching every apartment of the castle, that they may see for themselves, that the young princes are not here. Tell him to give them every assurance of my good faith, and if they fear to come alone, they may even bring with them a sufficient number of men to defend them!—Go.

REDWALD. My Lord, thy orders shall be executed to the letter. (*Exit.*)

GODWIN. Really, things are succeeding well—the two princes are no more. In a few moments, the lords will see for themselves that they are not here—and before me opens a brilliant future. Years of power, without obstacles, and without rival.

(*Enter* SWEYN.)

SWEYN. My Lord, the prince is taken care of.

GODWIN. Good! there will be no longer any reason to fear him. (*SWEYN looks sad*) But thou art sad, Sweyn;—what is troubling thee?

SWEYN. I am thinking my lord, that power and dignity in this world are sometimes dearly bought.

GODWIN. True—but again, power brings with it many satisfactions. Is it not a supreme satisfaction to be able to overthrow the plans of one's enemies—Ah, Seward, Leofric, bow your proud heads to the dust; come, bend the knee before Godwin, for 'tis Godwin that conquers, 'tis Godwin who is the master. Ah! Ah! Ah! Godwin, is the acting King of England. (*enter REDWALD*) Ah, Redwald, what now?

REDWALD. My lord—the enemy have attacked the castle and our defense has been completely routed. (*exit SWEYN*) They say Oswin, son of Seward, penetrated into the very chambers of the princes, and they demand that they be handed over at once.

GODWIN. Malediction—There are then traitors in my own castle—Sweyn—where is Sweyn.

REDWALD. (*looking around*) My lord—here comes Seward with his soldiers.

GODWIN. Furies—I am foiled—but—

(*enter SEWARD with soldiers.*)

OSWIN. Arrest him. This is their prison—Further over the bedroom. Where are they Godwin? Count of Kent, where are the princes?

GODWIN. If thou wilt find thy King—go descend the long stairs at the east end of the castle—They will lead thee to a subterranean cavern,—there, shall you find two mounds; dig down three feet, and thou shalt find the King of England, and his brother.

OSWIN. What, they are dead!

GODWIN. Ah! Ah! Ah! thou hast said it: Thy King is dead. (*enter LEOFRIC with soldiers*) What is this I hear! Edward dead.

GODWIN. Yes, thinkest thou I would willingly fall in your hands before satisfying my revenge on him who would have brought me to ruin had he conquered? Listen well Seward, hear me Leofric, and all you lords and servants. Edward—Your Edward—Edward your King is dead! (*enter SWEYN.*)

SWEYN. No, Count of Kent, Edward the King is not dead!

SEWARD. What sayest thou, Edward lives?

SWEYN. Learn Godwin—that for the past two days, I have consented to act as Edward's jailer, only that I might save him. My lords you will find him in an adjoining room, where I left him until I might assure myself of the taking of the castle. (*exit OSWIN.*)

GODWIN. (*rushes at SWEYN with drawn sword*) Traitor—
(*Duel; SWEYN wounded—enter EDWARD and OSWIN.*)

EDWARD to GODWIN. Stop! wretch!

ALL. Edward!—All hail to our King.

SWEYN. (*dying*) Oh my King..Pardon..Pardon my cruelty
..I die..I deserve it..Say thou dost forgive me, and I die content.

EDWARD. Sweyn—I owe thee my life—die in peace—all is forgiven (*SWEYN dies*).

GODWIN. Edward, thou hast conquered—here is my heart, strike!—take thy revenge!

EDWARD. A Christian takes not revenge—he pardons.

GODWIN. I do not want thy pardon—Strike.

EDWARD. Godwin I forgive thee all.

GODWIN. Then my own hand shall do the work. (*lifts poignard to strike.*)

LEOFRIC. Arrest him.

GODWIN. Away! touch me not; life is odious to me now—'tis death I want! (*soldiers prevent him from stabbing himself.*)

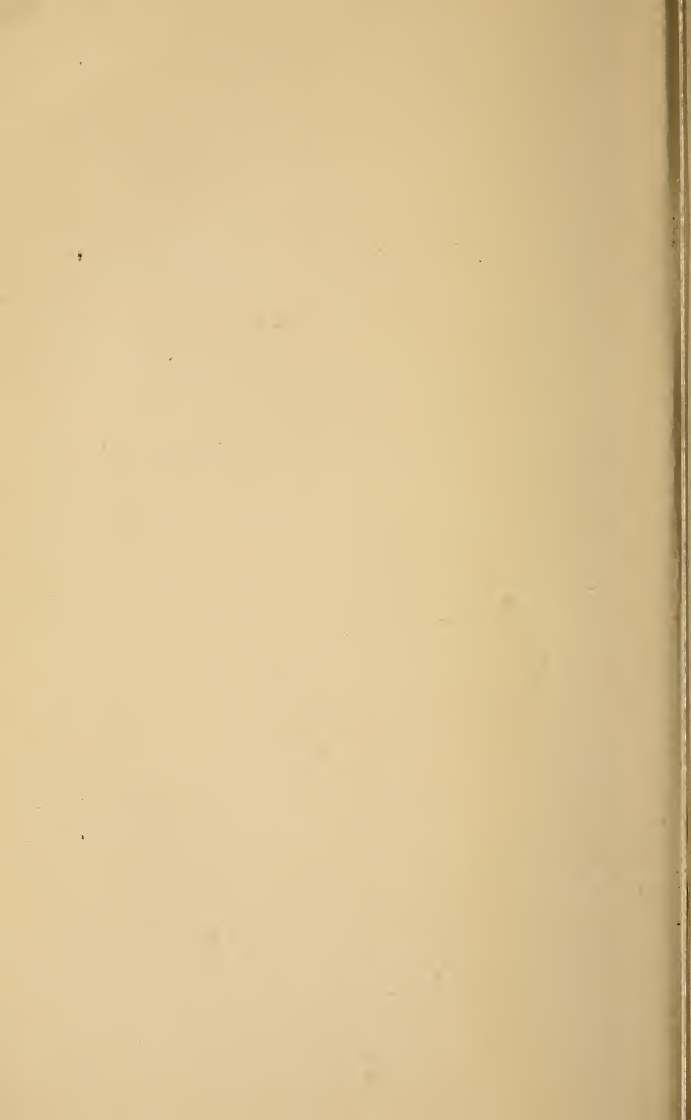
LEOFRIC. Take him away (*exit GODWIN between soldiers*).
Edward, son of Ethelred; all hail to thee, oh King of England.

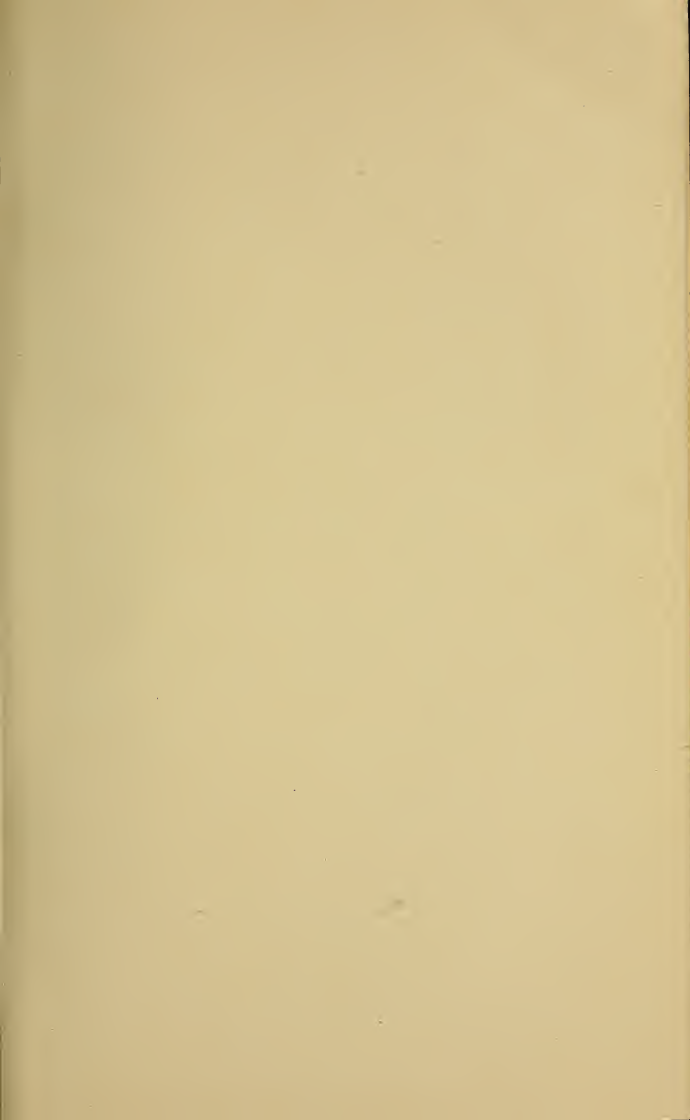
ALL. All hail to our King.

EDWARD. My lords—brothers—and friends in my misfortunes my heart bursts with emotion at such a sudden reverse of events. Receive my most sincere thanks for the generosity with which you all have interested yourselves in saving me from the power of my enemies. Leofric, thou shalt be my counselor. Brave Seward, the chief of England's forces on land and sea; and thou, generous Oswin, wilt replace at my side the vacancy made by my absent brother. Oh Alfred thou dost no doubt take part in my triumph, a triumph which thy prayers have brought upon me; then rejoice, thy brother honors and blesses thee.—Now my lords, let us go to the altar and there, in solemn prayer, render thanks to God for all he has designed to grant us.

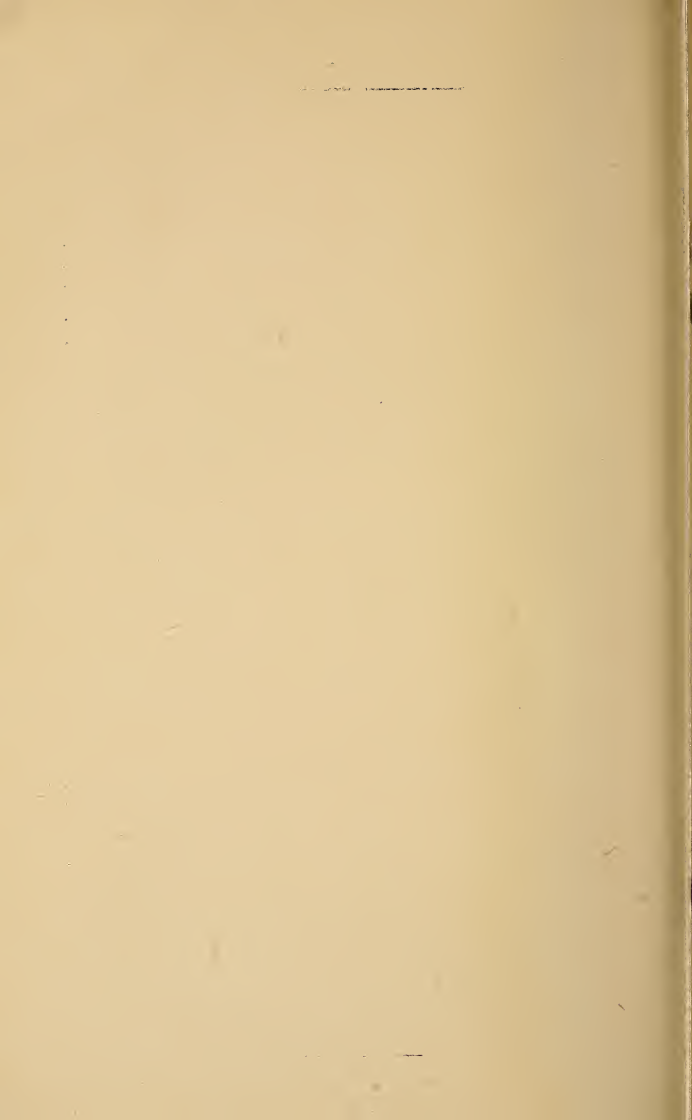
ALL. Long live Edward—long live the KING OF THE SAXONS!

CURTAIN.









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